



STATEMENT OF DR. GEORGE EBBS
EMBRY-RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY
HOUSE AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE
JUNE 15, 2004

Mr. Chairman:

I'm honored to appear before your subcommittee and to represent Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

With your indulgence, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a moment to introduce Embry-Riddle to your colleagues. Founded in 1926 as a training school for aviators and aviation mechanics, Embry-Riddle has remained true to its calling as an institution specializing in teaching the theory and practice of professional disciplines directly related to the fields of aviation and aerospace. In 1968, Embry-Riddle became the world's first fully accredited university devoted exclusively to education and research in aviation and aerospace. As these industries have grown, so have we. Today, Embry-Riddle has two residential campuses; one in Daytona Beach, Florida and one in Prescott, Arizona. In addition to 5,000 students enrolled in Daytona and 2,000 enrolled in Prescott, Embry-Riddle also provides course offerings and degrees to more than 20,000 military and civilian professionals through our extended campuses at 130 locations worldwide.

Embry-Riddle offers a number of bachelors and masters degrees in aviation and aerospace related fields ranging from Aeronautical Science (our undergraduate professional pilot degree), Air Traffic Management, Aviation Safety and Security, Meteorology and Aerospace Engineering to Human Factors Psychology, Airline and Airport Management and Space Physics. Embry-Riddle works on a daily basis with federal agencies including the FAA, NASA, NSF, NWS, and DOD providing expertise and undertaking research, education, and training projects. In fact, it is Embry-Riddle instructors who teach Air Force Academy cadets to fly and Embry-Riddle faculty who provide safety training for about 600 Air Force safety officers each year in Albuquerque.

In all, Embry-Riddle is actively engaged in the education, training, growth and development of almost every area of aviation and aerospace, here in the United States, and around the world.

Who we are and what we do applies with special force to the topic before your committee today: the status of the Air Traffic Controller Work Force. At Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, almost 500 students are now preparing to become air traffic controllers through our Air Traffic Management degree program. To accommodate the popularity and growth of the program, initiated in the fall of 2000, we have just hired our sixth full-time faculty member dedicated specifically to this program.

Our ATC training program is not only the nation's largest among the 13 Collegiate Training Initiative (CTI) institutions, but our students on average, I would suggest, are the best prepared of any -- with skills and training equal to those who graduate from the ATC Academy in Oklahoma City. All of our graduates have consistently qualified for entry into the air traffic controller OJT environment. Feedback we receive from the FAA underscores our assessment of their capabilities and superior performance.

There are two reasons for this success. First, our faculty has outstanding credentials. We are the only school where every ATC faculty member has at least 20 years of experience as an air traffic controller and has an earned doctorate or a master's degree.

Second, our instructional environment is unrivaled. Our simulation equipment is industry standard and state-of-the-art. ERAU was among the first to install the Adacel tower simulators. NASA, FAA and the Air Force have since followed suit and have identical equipment.

It is our understanding that the nation faces a significant need for new controllers in the next ten years as our ATC system modernizes and expands and as many current long service controllers retire. With Embry-Riddle's programs, faculty and facilities -- designed specifically to educate quality air traffic controllers -- ERAU stands ready to play a significant role in helping to meet this growing need in a timely manner and at no additional cost to the government.

Mr. Chairman, there are two impediments to dramatically increasing controller supply that I would urge you and your committee to consider:

- 1) Today, every Embry-Riddle ATC graduate must attend an additional six-week training program at Oklahoma City before they move into the ATC OJT environment. We believe that this is an unnecessary and costly step. Were Embry-Riddle granted the same status as the FAA academy and the Minneapolis Community Technical College (MCTC) and were we permitted to send our graduates directly to the OJT environment, the FAA could realize significant savings in both time and expense.

What is contained in our four year ATC curriculum meets and exceeds the training program currently required at Oklahoma City. Consequently, our graduates currently experience unnecessary delays entering the OJT program – a program for which they are already well qualified. And the FAA is spending scarce resources training already qualified personnel who do not require it. I would also like to add and emphasize that Embry-Riddle students pay for their own education. Therefore, from an FAA perspective, training costs are zero. The motivation for our students entering this program at their own expense is the reasonable prospect of FAA employment at graduation.

- 2) I would also urge you and your committee to consider an accelerated ATC training program housed at ERAU. The program would target aspiring Air Traffic controllers who already have a college degree. With a program such as this, we could deliver an additional 600 trained air traffic controllers to the FAA annually. This figure is 60% of the estimated national requirement. Current federal rules limit Embry-Riddle to training only degree seeking students. This restriction serves no educational or public policy purpose and we would urge its elimination.

To prepare for this accelerated program, Embry-Riddle can acquire the necessary equipment and add the necessary faculty, without cost to the FAA. Once the equipment and faculty are in place, we can train a degreed controller -- utilizing an intense and demanding curriculum -- in about six months. Assuming entering classes of 100 students every two months, we feel confident that ERAU can graduate 600 new controllers annually. These graduates would be trained to the same exacting standards we currently maintain in our undergraduate program and they can be expected to be fully as qualified for immediate OJT entry into the FAA ATC system. Equally important, they will have paid for this education themselves.

We believe that these two reforms can be easily implemented, significantly increasing the number of highly qualified new ATC controllers at significant savings to the FAA and the nation. The FAA incurs approximately \$6,000 in per diem costs and \$12,000 in salary for each student who attends the academy. If Embry-Riddle graduates were allowed direct entry into the OJT work force, the savings to the FAA could approach \$18 million per year.

Mr. Chairman, as you and your colleagues address the air traffic controller issue, I would urge you to consider private sector alternatives that can provide qualified controllers at minimal cost to the government. We at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University are up to this challenge.